**[Read Passage] (possibly chapter 3 as well?)**

**Big Idea:** Standing firm in the Lord.

**Purpose Then:** Exhorting the Philippian church to stand firm in the Lord, and to reconcile a division in the church.

**Call Now:** Stand firm in the Lord, in the ways Paul describes and demonstrates.

**Head**

Paul’s purpose is clear in chapter 4 verse 1: “stand firm in the Lord in this way”. He is writing to a church, a group of believers, for which he clearly cares deeply, and his desire is for them to know Christ deeper, to stand firm in the Lord, and so increase his own joy for them. Paul writes to “stand firm in the Lord *in this way*” – that is, the way he has been explaining in the chapter before, and throughout the letter.

So looking up at chapter 3 there is so much for us to take in. Working our way through, in verse 2 Paul has warns to stay away from those who say you must be circumcised to come to Christ. This more generally represents those who add anything to the gospel message of faith alone in Christ alone. We are to have faith – believe – that Christ has done it all, that he has sent his spirit to circumcise hearts (verse 3), to mark us as His own, and it is by the spirit that we rightly come before our heavenly Father in praise and service. True righteousness does not come from the law or anything of this world, but through faith in Christ (3:9).

And Paul points his readers in verse 8 to the glory of Christ which surpasses everything else. When we believe that Christ has done all that is required to bring us into right standing with God, then a belief in His greatness in fulfilling that role follows. But of course Christ’s greatness is not just in the role He fulfilled, but the ongoing role of taking hold of us (verse 12), and pointing us to His ultimate purpose of transforming us to His likeness.

***[pause, slow]*** There *are* those who live as enemies to the cross of Christ (18 and 19), but they are destined for destruction. On the other hand, the citizenship of the believer, of the one who Christ called for His purpose, for whom His greatness was displayed on the cross, the citizenship of the believer is in heaven (verse 20), and one day – when Christ returns – our lowly bodies will be transformed to be like his glorious body.

Hear these truths from the spirit speaking through Paul, know them, stand firm in this way, believe in them – and let them transform your attitude and character; your heart.

**Heart**

Rejoice in the Lord (3:1) – that’s how chapter 3 starts – “rejoice in the Lord”, and as we look down to chapter 4 verse 4 this reaches its climax where Paul writes – “Rejoice in the Lord *always*. I will say it again: rejoice!”

The child of God who believes the greatness of Christ will put no confidence in the flesh, in the things which this world values, the things which may appear so profitable now, which Paul lists for Himself in chapter 3 verses 4-6, but in truth distract from delighting in the surpassing greatness of Christ and so cause us to lose great joy. Paul calls his readers to develop an attitude which desires to know Christ deeper – in 3:10 ***[forceful]*** the power of His resurrection, ***[pause, soft]*** and the participation in his sufferings. And as we do so, we eagerly await the day when He will return.

**Hands**

What does that look like day by day? One thing is pressing on in pursuing the Lord. In 3:12 and 3:14 – commitment to His word, building relationships, whatever that looks like for you – but forgetting what is behind, what we once valued and saw as profitable, and instead straining on towards what is ahead (verse 13). Look at Paul’s example, and that of Timothy, Epaphroditus, and other Christ-like believers in our churches, and we follow their example in the way that they point to Christ (3:17). Stand firm in the Lord in this way!

Of course that’s not what Euodia and Syntyche were doing. Paul pleads (verse 2) with these two women to be of the same mind ***[pause]*** in the Lord. Disagreements in our churches are a major hindrance to the standing firm of the believers. As we take our eyes off Christ, as we no longer see Him in the behaviour of others, other things fill that space and draw us further from His greatness. These things which draw us away may not be bad of themselves. Paul does not speak about the actual matter these women disagree about – it seems it’s not a core issue – but the graveness of their argument is in how it detracts from Christ’s glory both for them personally and in the life of the church for which Paul cares so deeply.

**Specific situations + What hinders + What helps**

We often end up putting our confidence in things of the flesh, trying to stand on things other than Christ. Maybe we value the opinions of others so highly that we can’t admit we’ve made a mistake or got something wrong, maybe we can’t share our struggles with sin, and don’t share the gospel with those heading for destruction. Or perhaps our confidence is in the desire to be ‘right’, and so we start discussions not to build others up, but so we can show off what we’ve learnt at TEAM this week and what a great Christian we are because of it. Maybe our confidence is in children, and what good Christian influences we are. Whatever it is, these things draw us away from Christ. We want to stand firm on these things, maybe with one leg on Christ and one on something else – but when we come back to Christ all these things are shown to be weak and unsound. Just as an x-ray shows a broken bone Christ’s greatness shows the weakness of the things we put our confidence in and as we try to stand on them, ***[reach for leg]*** they fail, and cause us great pain. “Be of one mind *in the Lord*”. It is He who gives us unity – and we must help each other in this. Paul asks the church in Philippi, in verse 3, to “help these women”, and he reminds them of the good fruit these women have produced in the past – even providing Clement as a witness to this.

So let’s support one another and our brothers and sisters in our churches. Look to where they contend well for the gospel and encourage one another. Point each other to ***[head]*** believe in the truths of the redemption in Christ. ***[heart]*** Develop an attitude like that of Christ Jesus, ***[hands]*** and push on to become more like Christ. Do this as one church, one body, co-workers whose names are in the book of life.

Stand firm in the Lord in this way.